

Is Loop 303 named Estrella Freeway?

by **Carrie Watters** - Jun. 21, 2008 07:52 AM
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The name of Loop 303 stumps a lot of people.

Some call it the Estrella Freeway, others say Estrella Parkway.

Buzzzzzzz - neither is correct, at least not anymore.

In 2005, the Arizona State Board on Geographic and Historic Names christened the route as the Bob Stump Memorial Parkway, eliminating any reference to Estrella, to honor the late Arizona congressman.

The new name was likely a smart move, because Estrella Parkway already exists as an arterial road in Goodyear about two miles east of the loop.

The far west loop should get more attention in the coming years as it expands into an actual freeway and developments crop up alongside it.

But a vote to rename a road is one thing. Erasing a former name from maps and local memory is a tougher nut.

A recent *Glendale Republic* story about the city's plan to annex thousands of acres along the "Estrella Parkway" led to a phone call from Roger Ball of the Maricopa County Department of Transportation.

"It's not the Estrella Parkway," Ball said.

Still, the county transportation spokesman, trying to set things right, admitted that even the Garmin global positioning system in his vehicle tells him to make his turn onto Estrella, instead of calling it the 303 or mentioning Stump.

Ball wasn't sure how Estrella and the loop got tangled, but he said that he routinely calls cities, mapmakers and yes, newspapers, to set things straight.

Scrounging through the *Arizona Republic* archives shed some light on where the local vernacular went awry.

In 1986, city officials offered up names for planned Valley freeways. Estrella was put forth for the proposed 303 because of the nearby Estrella Mountains.

More than two decades ago, the state Transportation Board adopted the Estrella Freeway name.

Not long after, Loop 303 lost funding and the road through farm fields west of Luke Air Force Base languished, except in people's vocabulary as references to Estrella Freeway and, perhaps out of sloppiness, Estrella Parkway were used.

Cartographers sketched in the route with similar looseness.

A look at today's MapQuest, Google Maps and Rand McNally show the loop as either the Estrella Parkway, the Estrella Freeway or in some instances, both.

Bob Cournoyer, a senior cartographer who has charted the Valley's highways and byways since 1986, updated the Wide World of Maps in 2007.

Loop 303 shows as the Bob Stump Memorial Parkway on Cournoyer's maps.

But he acknowledged that you can't as easily erase a name and pencil in another on people's memories.

"Are you surprised that people still refer to it as Squaw Peak and not Piestewa Peak?" he asked, referring to the Phoenix mountain renamed in recent years in honor of Lori Piestewa, a Tuba City soldier killed in Iraq.

Cournoyer said making a name change stick can take generations.

Shifting gears can take a while for mapmakers and news reporters, too.